8: Graham E-5 (1921-1936) 1937 AE5 Miao AE5

581 181 There is a strong sentiment against marrying daughters into families that live far away or in desolate places on high mountains. The common belief that the Miao love to live on the high and rugged mountains and are unwilling to live on the rich and level plains is as great a mistake as historians ever made. The Miao live on the high and rugged mountains because they are a defeated people and have been forced to do so. The Ch'uan Miao name for heaven is "Ntao ni l∧u G∧u bl" or "the ancient level country of God." It is a land where there are no more steep mountains to climb.

585 Before the bride leaves her home, a meal is provided by her parents for her and for those who escort her. In the wedding procession there are generally one or more old women, relatives of the bride, a male relative or friend who manages the procession, the brothers of the bride and other friends who choose to go along. If it is a long distance to the groom's home, a meal is provided to be eaten by the way. In the bridal procession are generally carried such clothing, boxes, chests of drawers or other objects that have been given as bridal presents by her parents to the bride. The manager carries with him a bamboo tree with roots which symbolizes the large number of descendants of the couple. It is also supposed to have magic power to help the family thus to prosper. Sometimes a branch of a tea tree is also carried. Some plant the bamboo tree and others hang it up on the wall of the house. The *lin shêng* is not used at weddings for its notes are thought to be too sad for such occasions.

On arriving at the home of the groom, the brothers of the bride generally escort her into the house as a protection from demons. If she has no brothers, first cousins will do and lacking these, other male relatives may be invited to act as brothers. When entering the house the bride covers her face with a black and a white cloth. Her older brother goes in front and she holds onto his belt. Behind her an older or younger brother holds an umbrella over her as protection from demons.

Sometimes the bride and her companions enter the home and walk around in a circle three times. At other times, the Chinese custom of kowtowing three times to parents, relatives, and friends is followed. Tea is soon offered to the guests. According to an old custom that is no longer observed, the meat of a particular kind of bird and fish were provided at wedding feasts. There is always a wedding feast for the relatives and friends. One of the male relatives later counts before all the clothing, chests of drawers, and other things that have been sent along by the bride's parents. When her relatives and friends finally depart, the groom and his relatives go through a form of detaining her by force. This shows that

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577 836 he has been, the boy will answer that he /91/ was delayed on the hunt. The girl will say that she spent the time looking for some object, or that she stayed overnight with a girl friend or give some other such excuse. When I quite innocently asked a young man who was returning from his three-day excursion where he had been, he replied in all seriousness: "Wild pigs have devastated our rice field, and I lay in wait for them. They were too clever, however, and I could not catch them." At the same time, his father, who had overheard our conversation, winked at me and later whispered into my ear: "He returned dead-tired from a visit to his girl."

•581 For the Meau, the decisive factor in the selection of a female partner is not the social position, but the physical characteristics of the girl. When I asked a Meau who would [732] [143] marry a stupid girl -- it was a case of cretinism, which occurs rather frequently -- he answered me briefly and characteristically: "A stupid man," even though in this case the girl belonged to a powerful and rich sib. The fact that girls at the [585] [614] moment of marriage completely give up their connection with their sib and enter the sib of the husband may play an important role in this. Among the girls of the Meau, on the other hand, even though they are not concerned specifically about the social position of the man, there are other significant factors that are not connected with sexuality. This is indicated in the reply of girls whom I questioned about the type of man they would like to have. In one form or another the answer was always: "Clever and strong, in order to master life." Not a single one put any value on a handsome or "dashing" man. The closeness to nature of the Meau permits the girls to see clearly what proficiency in the primeval forest life means. To be sure, I never met a single incompetent man among the Meau. The stern laws of nature would soon cause him to disappear from this society.

595 833 513 Married people customarily have sexual union at night in their bedroom. In answer to my question as to what the other wives do if the husband, who shares his bed with all of his wives, bestows his attention on one, my informant said: "The others